

WHERE THE “IF” LIES

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A SERMON
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*“Jesus said unto him, If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes.”
Mark 9:23.*

I BELIEVE that our own Authorized Version conveys to the mind of the reader the sense intended by the Evangelist. It is, however, exceedingly probable that in exact words the Revised Version is nearer to the original. It runs thus—“And Jesus said unto Him, If you can! All things are possible to him that believes.” Our own Version better expresses the sense to the general reader, and the main objective of a translation is to give the meaning. The father of the lunatic child had said to our Lord, “If You can do anything, have compassion on us, and help us,” and our divine Master virtually replies, “The ‘if you can’ lies not with Me, but with you. It is not if *I* can, but if *you* can.” Thus you see the word, “believe,” is implied, if not actually expressed. Jesus would certainly go as far as ever the man’s faith could go, but as the rule of the kingdom is, “According to your faith, so be it unto you,” the man’s unbelief would hamper the Lord in His working. If the suppliant could be rid of unbelief, Jesus would get rid of the devil from his child. The difficulty of casting out the demon lay mainly in the lack of faith in the father. Let it, then, be understood as the teaching of this text, that the difficulties in the way of souls that would be saved do not lie with Jesus Christ, but with themselves. They need never ask the question, “Can Jesus forgive?” or, “Can He renew?” There is a prior question—can you believe that He can forgive, and that He can renew? If God’s grace enables you to say, “I can and do believe that Jesus can work in me according to the full measure of my need,” then all difficulty has vanished. Your faith is the shadow of the coming blessing, the token of the Lord’s favor towards you. When your faith believes in Christ’s omnipotence, He is omnipotent to you, for “all things are possible to him that believes.”

I long at this time to get at some here that cannot get at Christ. I would to God that by His Spirit I may deal with their difficulties, so as to remove them once and for all, so that they may come just as they are, and put their trust in Jesus, and this day find eternal life.

I. The first subject we shall speak about is the vital question—WHAT IS BELIEVING? After all these hundreds of years of gospel preaching, is this question necessary? I believe it is so necessary that, if faith were explained in every sermon, it would not be too often spoken of. It is a good rule that every tract ought to contain the gospel, and it ought to be put in the plainest way, for still, despite all the gospel teaching which is around us, nothing is so little known or so little understood as faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I am also bound to admit that many explanations of faith are no explanations, but tend to make the subject darker than it was before, and I am fearful lest my own explanation should be of the same order. Certainly, I will do my best to avoid such a catastrophe, for I will speak very plainly.

Let us take the man before us as an example, and from him let us see what faith is. This man evidently believed that Jesus was a healer, for he says, “I brought my son unto You.” He would not have brought his son to Jesus if he had not felt some measure of confidence in Him. *It is a good beginning of faith to know that if I am saved it must be through Jesus Christ alone.* It is well to be aware that the salvation of the soul must come from the work of Jesus, and from no one else, since no other name is given among men whereby we must be saved. This man had also some slight faith in Christ’s willingness to help him. It may not have been very strong, but still it was there, or else he would not have laid the stress of his prayer upon the Lord’s power. He did not say, “If You will, You can,” but “if You can do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.” Looking up into that blessed face so full of singular tenderness, the man felt that he might say, “Have compassion on us.” From some persons we could not ask compassion or fellow feeling, because they do not appear to have any, they wear a harsh look, and a chill air surrounds them. But the Savior was not so. The man felt that Jesus was full of compassion. His

suit was that this compassion would show itself to him and his son. *It is a good beginning to saving faith if you believe that Jesus is willing to save you.* I trust that many of you have advanced as far as this.

What is it really and savingly to believe in Jesus? The suppliant father had not yet reached that point of faith which would secure the miracle, more was needed, what was it? *He needed to believe in Christ's power in reference to his own case.* The point in which his faith failed was our Lord's power as to the special case now before Him, for he said—"If You can do anything." Before you condemn the anxious father for his doubt, let me remind you that his son was in a very evil plight, and our Lord had just caused him to remember and review the sad features of the case. The father had sorrowfully dilated upon the fact that, "wherever the spirit takes him, he tears him, and he foams and gnashes with his teeth, and pines away." And then he had further told the Lord that the youth had suffered thus ever since he was a child. And he had gone still more into detail, saying, "Often it has cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him." After that painful detail he added his pitiful, "If You can." Do you wonder at it? Jesus seems to tell him, "If you can believe in the teeth of all this, then you shall see the salvation of God." It is very easy to say, "I believe," when you have no sense of your sin, and no consciousness of your danger. It is the easiest thing in the world to say, "Yes, Christ can save me," when you do not really believe that you need saving. Faith, where there is no present sense of need, is but the image of faith, and not the grace which saves the soul. This is the question; *can you, my dear hearer, at this moment trust Jesus to save you, though you feel that you are full of sin?* Can you say, "Lord, I am possessed with the spirit of evil? I am under bondage to him, and have been so since I was a child. I have been driven to one sin and so cast into the fire, and then I have been hurled into the opposite sin, and so thrown into the water. I have been rent with passion, and torn with evil desires. I have sinned against light and knowledge. I have sinned against love and mercy. I have sinned in thought, and word, and deed. I have sinned grievously and continually, and yet I believe that You can pardon me, and that You can make me a new creature. Wicked as I am, I believe that You can drive sin from the throne of my heart and cause me to love You and to serve You all my days." If you can believe in Jesus after this fashion, He will save you, yes, He has saved you. If you as an undeserving sinner, can so honor the mercy of God as to believe that through Christ Jesus He can blot out your sin, it shall be done unto you, only remember that this confidence must not come to you because of your forgetfulness of your sin, but while you are conscious of it and humbled on its account. If I persuade myself that I am merely a sinner in name, then I shall only find Jesus to be a Savior in name. If I am not such a sinner as to deny that I am a sinner, but pay the Lord the compliment of saying, "Oh, yes, I am a sinner, we are all sinners," then I am a sham sinner, and I shall become a sham believer, and the true Savior will have nothing to do with me. Jesus came to save that which is really and truly lost. The downright sinner, who dares not deny his guilt, is the object of the Lord's saving search. In the teeth of your conscious guilt, can you believe that Jesus can wash you and renew you? Then you have one main element of the faith which saves.

Yet, mark you, if this man could by any possibility have believed in Christ's power to save his son and yet had refused to bring him to Jesus for healing, he would have missed one of the essentials of true faith. For, listen, *if you would get to the very heart and core of faith, you have it here, it is to trust the Lord.* Trust! Trust! That is the word. To believe that Christ is able to save you is essential, but to put yourself into His hands that He may save you is the saving act. Believe Christ's word to be true, then appropriate that word to yourself as spoken to you, believe that it is true to you, and rest in the truth of it—that is saving faith. To see Christ as such a Savior as you need, able and willing to save you, is a right good sight, but you must also take this Savior to be yours. Say heartily, "Into those hands which were nailed to the cross I commit my guilty soul, hoping and believing that Jesus will forgive all my trespasses, and cause me to love all that is true and holy from now on and forever."—

*"You can, You will (I dare not doubt),
The indwelling demons chase.
I trust Your power to cast them out,
I trust Your pardoning grace."*

He that trusts in Jesus is saved. I said not, "He *shall* be saved," but He *is* saved. "He that believes in Him has everlasting life." "He that believes in Him is justified from all things, from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses."

Will you please to notice about this man's faith, that *it was not perfect faith.* Though it obtained for him the healing of his son, it was weak faith, and for its weakness he was blamable, but the faultiness of

his faith was not the destruction of his faith. A feeble faith can receive a mighty Savior, even as a beggar with a palsied hand can receive a golden gift. An heir to an estate has as good a title to it when he is a child as he will have when he is grown up, and even so little faith possesses the inheritance, though as yet it is a babe. The anxious father had to cry, "Lord, help my unbelief," but that unbelief, confessed and lamented, did not shut him out of the blessing. The unbelief which lingers around our faith is a thing to be rid of by the help of Christ, but still it will not destroy the virtue of the faith which we possess. So, dear friend, if your faith in Jesus Christ amounts to this, that you believe Him able to save, and you do therefore trust Him, you are a saved man, even though you may be staggered with a host of fears, and troubled with a multitude of sins. Your faith has saved you, go in peace, for that faith of yours shall grow from a mustard seed into a far spreading tree. I would that you could take Jesus up into your arms as Simeon did, for then would you say with full assurance, "My eyes have seen Your salvation." But if you cannot do so much as that, at least stretch out your finger and touch the hem of the Lord's garment, for if you do but touch His clothes you shall be whole. The faintest contact with the ever-blessed Christ will open up a way by which saving power will flow out of Him into you. Oh, how blessed it is to think that God has ordained this plain way of faith for poor sinners! It is of faith that it might be of grace, to the end that the promise might be sure to all the chosen seed.

This faith in the Lord Jesus ought to be to each one of us the easiest thing in the entire world. If we were what we ought to be, it would never occur to us to doubt our Lord Jesus, and our shameful unbelief of Him is the most conclusive evidence of our need of Him, for we must have become grievously wrong in heart to be forced to admit that we find it difficult to believe in Jesus. What an insult to Him! What a crime on our part! Remember the whole story of grace and blush for your wicked unbelief. God, the ever-blessed, whom we had offended, sent His dear Son to be made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and He dwelt here among us as our brother, friend and helper. In the fullness of time He took upon Himself our sin and sorrow, and went up to the cross with the awful load of our guilt. Though still the well-beloved Son of the Father, He suffered even unto death in place of His people, and God's record concerning Him is that He has set Him forth as the propitiation for sin. God has accepted His atonement, will not sinners accept it? This is the Savior, God has ordained Him such; will not the sinner agree that Jesus should save him? If not, why not? If we were not fallen to the uttermost degree of depravity, we should cry out with delight, "Lord, we believe. Blessed be the dear name of Jesus, our Substitute, we can and do trust Him. We are quite sure if the Lord God has made Jesus to be His salvation to the ends of the earth, He must be a perfect salvation; therefore we accept Him with joy and delight." But this is the curse of our nature, the innate vice of our hearts, that we cannot believe our God, thus making Him a liar. Oh, the horror of suspecting His truth, which angels adore with veiled faces! Oh, the daring presumption of questioning the promise of a faithful God! It is horrible, horrible; horrible to the last degree to mistrust the Almighty Father, to doubt His bleeding Son! There ought to be no room for an "if" when we know that in the Lord Jesus all fullness dwells. I am not at this moment speaking to those who reject the Word of God, and deny the Deity of Christ, I can understand their position, and will deal with them another time, but I am now speaking to you who accept this Bible as God's Word, and unquestioningly believe that Jesus Christ is divine, to you I say that your refusal to put your trust in Him is without excuse. At least, I cannot find an excuse for you. Remember those telling words of the Lord Jesus—"if I tell you the truth, why do you not believe Me?" If you believe Jesus to be the Son of God and the Savior of men, why do you not trust your own soul with Him? Why not at this moment confide in Him whom you admit to be worthy of your trust?

II. I have tried thus to explain the nature of faith. I will now, in the second place, deal with the startling question, **HOW IS IT THAT FAITH CAN BE DIFFICULT?** It certainly is difficult to some. It cannot be so in itself, yet many in trouble of heart find it to be so, and those that labor to bring them to Christ, find themselves sorely put to it.

Why, first, *it is difficult to get the very idea of faith into some men's minds*—not only difficult for them to believe, but even to know what it is to believe. I have met with persons who have attended a place of worship regularly twenty or thirty years, and yet they have never made the discovery that faith is a childlike trust in Jesus. I, as a lad, was taught this blessed secret by the Spirit of God, but it was at first a great wonder to me that I should have attended evangelical ministries for years, and yet should not have known what was meant by believing in Christ. That simple truth broke in upon my mind like a new

revelation. I had read the Bible. There was no part of it with which I was not acquainted, and yet even from that blessed Book I had not learned what believing in Christ meant. Is not this amazing? It is remarkable, and yet it is a general fact. We try by illustrations, by anecdotes, by parables, to drill the notion of faith into men, but we cannot even get it unto their heads, much less into their hearts. Martin Luther complained that he thought he must take the Bible and bang it about his hearers' heads because he could not get them to see its clear teaching as to justification by faith. This idea of believing is alien to men's minds, and it can only dwell there by forcing its way against the tendency of human nature. Again, I say, that this is a sad proof of human depravity, since in itself it is no difficult idea; it is the simplest thought that can be uttered or accepted. Trust your salvation with Christ, and Christ will save you, is a lesson which a baby may learn. Still, the unregenerate do not think so, they muddle it all up, and stick to their belief that faith is something to be felt, or seen, or done, or suffered. To trust their God, to rely upon the atonement of His Son—this is not to their mind, and so their foolish heart is darkened, and they cannot see the way which lies straight in front of them.

When we get that thought into our hearers' heads, then comes the next difficulty, *to make them believe that faith can save them*. It seems so difficult to believe this *because the way is so easy*. They ask—"What! Am I, after thirty, forty, fifty years of sin, to be delivered from all the punishment of my transgressions by simply trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ?" If you were to tell them that they must go to a desert and live there as hermits on berries and cold water for the rest of their natural lives, they would believe the message. If they were told to scourge themselves with whips of wire, they would expect some good result from such suffering, but not from merely believing. If they were to look the idea of propitiating God by their personal suffering, it would soon become impossible to believe, yet for a time they incline to it rather than to the doctrine of salvation by trust in the great Substitute. Hideous imaginations, despairing and dread are also looked upon hopefully by many. They hope that by deep feelings they may arrive at forgiveness, and may force their way to heaven by the gates of hell. But to trust Christ, and to believe the promise of God, is a thing too simple for them. They fear that safety is not to be found so soon! Ah! Poor soul, if the prophet had bid you do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much rather then when he says to you, "Believe and live?"

I wish you would change your opinion as to what faith really is, for it is by no means so insignificant a matter as you suppose. Simple as it is, there lies within it great excellence and value. Faith in God is the most divine exercise of the mind. To believe in God and His Christ is to be reconciled to God and restored from enmity. We are in unison of heart with those we trust. To believe your God is to worship Him, the essence of worship is faith. For a poor sinner to trust the Lord, gives Him more honor than the cherubim can bring Him with their loftiest notes of praise. In the teeth of all my sin and sinfulness, with a thorough sense of my guilt, I believe that the blood of Jesus has saved me—is not this true praise? To confess scarlet sins, and yet to say, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow," gives the Lord great glory for His mercy and His power. Yet the doctrine of, "Believe and live," startles poor sinners because it is too easy!

When they get over the idea of its extreme ease, *they say, to themselves, "This news is certainty too good to be true*. Do I really understand you, sir, that if I trust the Lord Jesus now, I am at once delivered from sin and am made a new creature in Christ?" Yes, you understand my teaching if that is the sense you find in my words. Yet you say it is too good to be true. Do you not see how poorly you think of your God? I know that pardoning grace is infinitely above your deserving or thoughts, but then does not the Lord say of Himself, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts"? Grace may be too good for you to expect, but it is not too good for God to bestow. Oh that you would think better of God than you have done, and say of His amazing grace, "It is just like Him!" Sing with me these words—

*"Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?"*

Salvation pitched in such a key as this, given freely to whoever believes in Jesus! Why, that is just like the Lord, and we will accept it as having the divine stamp and impress upon it. He forgives like a God, and this does not stagger our faith but confirms it.

Then, again, men are astounded by *the rapidity of justification*. Shall fifty years sinning be forgiven in a moment? Shall an instant's believing end the guilty past, and commence a holy future? It is even so,

in one instant a man begins a course of believing which introduces him into a new world. What is strange about this? Is it not God's way to do wonders in a short time? He took but a week to fit up the earth for man, no, six days sufficed, and on the seventh He rested. To make the light in which we rejoice, only needed for the Lord to say, "Let there be light." In the case before us our Lord only said to the demon, "I charge you, come out of him, and enter no more into him," and the deed was done. If we had all time at our disposal, we could not work such wonders, but to God there are no limits as to length or brevity of time. A thousand years are to Him as one day, and one day as a thousand years. He speaks, and it is done. Think of it—salvation in a moment! The moment a sinner believes he lives unto God, and his trespasses are forgiven. Oh sinner! Why should you doubt it? Yet we cannot get the conscience-stricken one to believe it.

If we lead our friends out of this difficulty, they plunge into another. *They cannot be satisfied with the Word of God alone as the ground for their faith.* Why do I believe that I am saved? I know that I am saved because the Word of God says, "He that believes in Him has everlasting life," and I do believe in Jesus, and therefore I have everlasting life. "But," says one, "if I had that word applied to me with power then I could and would believe it." Just so, but until then, you refuse to believe the promise of God and treat Him as a liar! God must give you some pledge or bond beyond His promise, because His word is not good enough for you, though you admit that even with a good *man* his word is his bond. You cannot trust your God. "Oh, but if I had a dream, I could believe." Just so, you would have more faith in a silly dream, perhaps caused by indigestion, than you have in the solemn word and written promises of God. "Oh, sir, but if an angel was to speak to me, I could believe," just so and if God does not choose to send the angels what then? Then He is not to be believed, but treated as a liar? What is this but saying, "Lord, You shall bow to my whims, or else I will not believe a word You say"? Has it come to this? Dare you demand signs from God? Then let me ask you—is this Book God's Word? Say, "No," and I can understand your conduct, but if you believe, as I know you do, that this is the very Word of God, how dare you disbelieve? If all the angels in heaven were to march by me in a file, and assure me that God would keep His word, I would say, "I did not require you to tell me that, for the Lord never fails to be as good as His word." God is so true that the witness of angels would be a superfluity. If my father were to make a statement, I certainly would not call in his servant to confirm it. If this Book is dictated by the Holy Spirit, it is ours to believe it without demanding confirmations or applications. Let us say, "That word is true, for God has said it. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, I am a sinner, and I trust Him to save me. Inasmuch as the Word says, 'To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name,' I do believe on His name, and therefore I have the power and privilege to become a child of God, and a child of God I am. God says so, that is enough for me." We cannot get men to see that the Word of the Lord is surer than all signs and wonders—they want something in addition.

If we compel them to admit that the Word of God is the only and sufficient basis of faith, *they straightway begin to look at their own believing as if it were the Savior.* They cry, "My faith is so weak, my faith is so variable, my faith is so shaken," and so forth. It is as if those who were bid to look to the bronze serpent had, instead thereof, tried to see their own eyes. Here is a thirsty child, and there is a flowing fountain, you give the child a cup that it may drink of water. The child does not go to the fountain, but is so pleased with its empty cup that it tries to satisfy its thirst out of it. What a foolish child! Or suppose it should refuse to go to the fountain because the cup was of earthenware, or of tin, would not that be a strange way for a thirsty child to act? A child needs the cup to drink out of, but it cannot drink out of an empty cup. Faith is the cup, but Christ is the fountain. Faith is a secondary thing compared with Christ. We must have faith to be as the finger with which we touch the hem of the Master's garment, but the finger does not work the cure. Shall I refuse to touch because perhaps I have not washed my finger clean, or it has no gold ring upon it, or there are traces of rheumatism in it? To attach so much importance to the finger as to refuse to touch Christ's garment with it would be insanity. Do not mind your finger, touch the garment's hem. Sinner, get to Christ some way, any way, for if you get to Him you will live. It is not, after all, neither the greatness or the perfection of your faith, it is *His* greatness and *His* perfection which is to be depended on.

Then the next trial is that we cannot get troubled sinners *to see the difference between their faith and its fruits.* "I would believe in Christ," says one, "if I were as holy as So-and-So, who is a believer, but

then you see I am a sinner." Now mark, dear friend, that, the person of whom you speak in that fashion does not think himself to be one particle more deserving than you are. If you talk to that good man, he will tell you that whatever holiness you can see in him is the work of grace, and that at the first he came to Jesus just as you must come, that is, as a sinner. Faith produces holiness, but when we first come to Jesus, at the first we come as unholy persons, and as such He receives us. Suppose that I have a number of bulbs which I am told will produce most remarkable flowers? If I believe the statement, I shall take care to have them properly planted. The gardeners are beginning to put such things into pots, that they may have hyacinths and other fair flowers in the winter and early spring. Suppose that I resolve not to plant my bulbs, because I use my own eyesight, and come to the conclusion that as I cannot see a hyacinth or even the beginnings of one in any of the bulbs, therefore there can be no use in planting them? Why, everyone would tell me that in this matter I must go by faith, and plant my bulbs in order that I may in due time see them bloom. "That bulb will yield beautiful blue flower," says one. I answer that it is a brown, dried-up sort of onion, and that I shall throw it on the dunghill, for I can see no bud or flower in it. What a simpleton I should be if I talked so! Though I cannot *see* it, yet there is, closely compacted and quietly hidden away within that bulb, a slumbering thing of beauty which will wake up at the call of spring. Even so, if you believe in Christ, there is a holy life packed away within your faith, and it will gradually develop itself. Even within a feeble faith there are the elements of ultimate perfection. If you truly trust Christ, your preparation for glory has begun. As king Charles II was hidden in the Royal Oak tree, so is Christ hidden in true faith. Do not, however, expect to see all this at first, look to the root, now, and the growth will follow. You are not to come to Christ because you are healed, but to get healing. Your faith must be a sinner's faith before it can be a saint's faith. Trust Christ while you are yet foul, lost, and undone, and He will wash, save and restore you.

Still, we find the awakened ones clinging to the idea that they must be something or feel something before they may trust Jesus. We cannot get them to see that the whole of their salvation lies in Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ alone. We cannot wean them from some sort of reliance upon their own feelings, or weeping, or prayers, or Bible-reading, or some other form of working. Why, they will even look to their own faith rather than to Jesus Christ alone. Know you not that our Lord has offered a full atonement for sin, and brought in a perfect righteousness for His people? His propitiation is to be accepted as full and complete, and His righteousness we are to wear as our own. Our whole trust must go to the perfect work of our Lord; it must not even rest on our faith. To trust in our own trusting would be absurd. A wounded man has healing ointment given him and a piece of linen with which to bind on the ointment. Now, if he were to wrap the linen around the wound and leave out the healing agent, he could not expect a cure. Faith is the linen whereon the ointment of Christ is spread, and we must not put it out of its due place and order, or we shall be making it a rival to Christ. Oh, that I could clear up some of the difficulties with which men surround themselves, so that they would consent to look out of themselves to Jesus only!

III. We must now speak to the last point. Oh, you that are seeking rest, dwell upon each word as it is now lovingly delivered to you. **WHAT IS IT THAT CAN MAKE FAITH EASY?** The Holy Spirit alone can do that, but He does so by bringing certain truths to remembrance. Faith is rendered easy to a man by the Holy Spirit when, first of all, he sees clearly *the infallible certainty of the sacred record*, and this is the record that God gave concerning His Son, that he that believes in Him has everlasting life. Is this Bible true or not? I believe in every letter of it. I accept it as God's Word in the most unreserved sense, and so do you to whom I now speak. Well, if that is so, then it remains no longer difficult to believe what is plainly taught in this Book. If God has spoken, then questions are ended. It may be a hard saying, it may be a dark saying, it may seem to be too good to be true, but what of that? Do we dare to question the Lord? He is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent. He has said that whoever believes in Jesus shall not perish, but have everlasting life, and if we have so believed, eternal life is ours.

The next thing that the Spirit of God helps us to see is *the applicability of that record to ourselves*. That is to say, we read, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," and we conclude that, as we are just such, we may look to Him to save us. We read, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." We labor and are heavy laden, and therefore we come, and He gives us rest. We read that, "in due time Christ died for the ungodly," and knowing that we are ungodly we yet

take heart and come to Him who justifies the guilty through His righteousness. We read again, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." We feel that to will is present with us, and therefore we freely take the living water. We read once more, "Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," and as we are creatures, we conclude that the gospel has something to say to us. On one or other of these accounts we see that the gospel is directed to us, and so we receive it. It is better for us that the promise should be directed to us in terms of character than that it should mention our actual names. Is your name John Brown? Well, if the gospel came in a letter to you, directed to John Brown, what might you not say if you were tempted to doubt? You would think to yourself that there are many more John Browns besides yourself, and therefore the message might not be for you. If it were directed to your address, you might then fear that another John Brown once lived at that house, before you were born, and so you would fear to appropriate the message lest it should prove to be out of date. Even supposing that your name was there, and the address, and the date, you might be mistrustful enough to fancy that there was a mistake, or that some other person of your name had used your address for the day. If you mean to ride on the back of unbelief, any fancy will do for a saddle. But when the promise comes "to him that believes in Jesus," there can be no question that it is ours if we believe. We read, "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins," is it not clear that if we have confessed our sins, mercy is ours? It is a blessed thing for us when the Spirit of God leads us to see that the gospel is free to all who are made willing to receive it.

Another thing that makes faith easy is when the Spirit of God shows us *the glory of Christ's person*. Our Savior is truly God, and this fact helps us to believe in Him. It strikes me that the poor anxious father may have been much helped to believe in our Lord by that peculiar majesty which shone about Him through His having just come down from the mount of transfiguration. It was a very hard case which exercised the poor man's mind, and therefore our Lord appeared to him with an unusual splendor—a splendor of which we read—"when they saw Him they were amazed." A sight of our Savior's face helped the trembler to cry, "Lord, I believe." Oh, if the Spirit of God will lead you to read the Scriptures till you get a clear idea of the Godhead and perfect manhood of the Lord Jesus you will feel that everything is possible with an Almighty Savior. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Our Lord is gone up to His glory, and He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. Oh, could you but grasp the idea that He who asks your trust is the Son of the Highest, who has all power in heaven, and in earth, you could not, you would not withhold your confidence! As for me, knowing beyond all doubt my Lord's divinity, it seems easy enough to rely upon Him. I have told you before what John Hyatt said on his dying bed, when his deacons said, "Mr. Hyatt, can you trust your soul with Christ now?" "One soul!" he said, "I could trust a million souls with Him if I had them." Even so I could trust the Lord Jesus not only with my soul, but with all the destinies of earth and heaven, time and eternity. Every child of God may safely say that. I could trust Jesus with all the souls that ever lived or shall live, if they were all mine. Surely, He is able to keep that which we have committed to Him.

Another great help to faith is to perceive *the completeness of the divine work and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus*. He took our sin upon Himself, and in His own body on the tree, was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Only let your eyes behold the Son of God suffering the death-agony for guilty man and you must believe in His power to redeem. I have thought that if men had been more sinful than they are, and if they were a million times as numerous as they are, and if every star that studs the midnight sky were a world, and all crowded full of sinners, yet the sacrifice of God Himself must from the glory of His nature be such a vindication of the law that it might well suffice as a reason for forgiving a rebel universe! Shall the infinitely holy suffer for the guilty? Shall the Eternal take upon Himself humanity, and bow His head to death? Then the sacrifice must possess such boundless efficacy that none may fear that it will fall short of their need. No limit can be set to the power which lies in the divine expiation. My God, I see that You have given Your own Son to die, and surely in His precious blood there is more than sufficient reason for my faith in You.

If that does not lead you to believe perhaps the Spirit of God will go to work in another way. Some have been helped to believe in Jesus by *the sight of others converted, justified, and made happy*. When someone like yourself is saved, you take courage. "I have been a thief," says one—

*"The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day.
And there may you, though vile as he,*

Wash all your sins away.”

“I have been an adulterer,” says one. Alas! So was David, but he said, “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” “I have been a murderer,” sobs a third. So was Manasseh, who shed innocent blood very much. “But I have been a persecutor and a blasphemer.” So was Saul of Tarsus, yet he obtained mercy. “But I seem to have far more of the devil in me than anybody else.” So had Mary Magdalene, out of whom Christ cast seven devils. You think you are a sinner all by yourself, but there have been others like you, and the door through which others have passed into mercy is open for you. If I had been a little rabbit in the day when Noah brought the living creatures into the ark, I do not think I should have been troubled about whether there was room for me to enter the ark. But if I had been so timid, I would have forgotten all my fears when I saw the elephant come up, and his mate with him, and had seen them go tramping through the door. Then I should have known assuredly that there was room for me. Oh, you who have been kept moral and upright, and therefore are not outwardly great sinners, surely you may enter where the chief of sinners have found ready admission. The salvation of others is often a sweet encouragement to sinners to trust in Christ.

Lastly, I will tell you one thing which will make you trust Him, and that is, *desperation as to all other hopes*. It is an amazing thing that despair is often the mother of faith, but the mother dies when the child is born. We were many of us led to believe in Jesus because we had nothing else to trust in. When we are driven to the last extremity, then it is we come to Jesus, and take Him to be our all in all. A boy was awakened in a house which was on fire. He could be seen from the street, poor child, and his danger was very great indeed. He rushed to the window. His father stood below and called to him to drop into his arms, but it was a long way down, and the child was afraid. He clung to the window, but dared not drop. Do you know what made him let go his hold and fall into his father’s arms? There came a burst of fire out of the window and scorched him, and then he dropped directly. I wish that some of you would get just such a touch of the fires of despair as to compel you to say—

*“I can but perish if I go;
I am resolved to try,
For if I stay away
I know I must forever die.”*

Years ago one of our students was greatly emaciated with what seemed to be consumption. He had heard of a certain medicine which was said to be useful in such cases, but he had no faith in it. When he was growing worse and worse, I said, “Brother, you are at death’s door. Try that man’s stuff. There may be something in it. At any rate, nothing else does you any good.” He took the medicine through sheer despair, of all other prescriptions, and God blessed it to him so that he is alive this very day. He would never have tried the remedy if he had not felt that there was no other hope. Even so, it will be well for you to be driven into a corner, as to your soul’s estate, that you may believe in Christ Jesus and say with His disciples in old times, “To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” Here is a closing verse for you to sing at home by yourself –

*“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Christ’s kind arms I fall!
He is my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all!”*

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MARK 9:2-29.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—249, 498, 551.**

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